

RUSSIA **AND** THE WEST IN IRAN

Powerfully supported as it was by the presence of the Red Army in Iran and by parallel Soviet official propaganda, the Tudeh between 1942 and the fall of 1944 gained more and more adherents and increased its influence. To be sure, it never gained the confidence of the majority of the people, nor could it ever dream of achieving this goal, but as a disciplined and determined group it was able to exert influence incommensurate with its actual numbers. The antiquated social and economic system of Iran, the great need for agrarian reform and for curbing the privileges of aristocracy, certainly created ideal conditions for the development of any extremist movement. If the Tudeh had been a genuine nationalist-patriotic party, not affiliated with foreign interests, perhaps it might have had better chances of ultimate success. As an instrument of Soviet policy, it obviously made enemies not only among the reactionaries but even among those who desired a radical reform in the country. The turning point in the party's popularity was undoubtedly the oil crisis of 1944. The open manner in which the party press supported the Soviet viewpoint opened the eyes of a number of previously misguided individuals. Many of those who initially were not too sure of their loyalties deserted the party. To remain in the Tudeh ranks after the Kavtaradze visit signified an indoctrinated Communist or a bribed sympathizer. Patriotic Iranians, even of a radical tinge, could see no reason why progress and reform should demand the alienation of national property to foreign hands.⁵⁰

Despite this "crisis of confidence," the party was not discarded by the Russians. On the contrary, continuous and even more intensive

use was made of its services culminating in the
Azerbaijan revolt in
1945. Of these things more will be said in the last
chapter.⁵¹

so In this sense *Zfeda-yi-Adalat*, Jan. 25, 1945.

si The author is indebted to the *Middle East Journal* for
permission to quote,
in the above section, from his article, "The Communist Movement
in Iran," which
appeared in the January, 1947, issue, pp. 29-45.